

The Philosophy of Inner Energy and Self Realization in the Verses of Kabir

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Abstract— Energy is usually evaluated in terms of scientific and environmental parameters. These parameters shape the surroundings around us and influence the socio-cultural aspects of our life. Inner energy is also one of the essential parameters of energy which is a matter of concern in the current scenario. The teachings of one of the most prominent 15th century Indian poet and singer, Kabir are well incorporated with the elements of nature in the form of literary devices such as metaphors, satire, irony, paradox and others in a rather straightforward and a direct approach. The study would explore and analyze how the nature elements used as literary devices in the verses of Kabir can be instrumental in diverting and directing one's energy from the negative or materialistic aspects of life towards something that in reality may contribute towards self-realization, inner-peace, contention and a joyful perception of life for one and all. The select study would cover areas which were not only essential during the era of Kabir but also hold timeless appeal and relevance even at the times at present.



Keywords— nature, energy, truth, inner-self, realization, awakening, enlightenment, transformation.

Kabir is listed among the prominent poets of India. He was one of those personalities who despite not writing any of his works but only through oral traditions has widely contributed towards the individual and social awakening by challenging, advocating, opposing, propagating, warning, suggesting and advising on the essential aspects of life which contribute towards the realization, awakening and attaining inner peace in the fabric of society which is the need of the hour at present. Some of the aspects which might help in realization and enrichment of the energy within the individuals are listed as follows:

On Intrinsic Nature:

Kabir has emphasized on the unwavering ability of good and evil in his teachings. Kabir notices that there can be two conditions for a particular situation. When a person or an object with pure or positive attributes comes across with someone having the exact opposite or evil characteristics or intentions, then in the first scenario it is only a true soul or a pure and virtuous person or people remain unshaken, unaffected by such negative influences

and continue to maintain their originality and purity. They don't tend to pollute themselves or try to grasp or acquire the opposite or negative attributes from the opposite person. Purity and authenticity continue to prevail and exist despite the malicious people or objects around it.

On the other hand, Kabir also insists on the second scenario that if goodness or purity around us remains unaffected despite the existence and influence of evil, evil also holds a very determined ability not to change itself despite the positive influences around. The same behavior or ability is observed in the people around us the ones we come across with. Someone good would continue to hold onto one's goodness no matter how much the person is distracted, tempted or forced to change and evil also continues to persist despite the different positive influences around it. Although, the degree of evil in something may vary with the demands of situation or time but it never frees itself from its intrinsic nature. It is a well believed fact that humans tend to change with situation or

time but still the intrinsic nature of a person or an object always remains the same.

Kabir also imparts us the wisdom of keeping the right people around us or being in the company of right people. Kabir suggests that no matter how much we try to impart the goodness to something bad, it hardly changes and despite every effort made by a bad person or an object to learn from the good and change oneself turns out to be futile as evil continues to hold on to its true characteristic.

Therefore, Kabir through the usage of nature as personification has attempted to shed light on this theme to awaken and enlighten about both the conditions which prevail around us. He proclaims:

“Snake coiled around the sandal tree, what can the sandal do?”

Every pore choked with poison- where can nectar go?”

The above verses very well emphasize on the idea that snake which is symbolic of evil, continues to be the same no matter how long it keeps itself coiled or wrapped around sandal tree which represents the goodness that prevails around us. Just the way the snake continues to be a poisonous creature and cannot acquire the properties of a sandal tree in the same way sandal tree continues to hold on to its aromatic properties and remains unaffected by the snake's poison.

On nurturing the inner-self:

Having shed light on one's intrinsic nature Kabir has also shed light on the theme of inner-self which highlight the deeds and karma of one's life. Each one of us has his own dreams and expectations from life but not everyone is able to put in the right amount of effort, dedication or hard work required to achieve them. It is also observed that sometimes people aim high and hope to achieve the best that life can offer to them but are not ready or willing to put in the required amount of time, effort or dedication for the same. Kabir suggests to the world that if anyone wishes or hopes to achieve the best in our life maybe in terms of family, career, lifestyle or other aspects then one should be truthful and loyal towards his own efforts otherwise the result would not meet the expectations. Kabir also advises:

“To get your fill of flowers and fruit, water the root.”

This verse also attempts to teach all that if one wants to have a beautiful and a happy world around them then one should be virtuous and one's deeds should align with one's consciousness. With an impure soul and malign intentions every effort put into work remains half-hearted. Everyone dreams to acquire the best out of everything but fails to realize the ultimate reality that only a true soul aligns one's deeds with the universe. The phrase 'water the root' refers

to the efforts required to make on the very fundamental aspects of life such as one's core characteristics, mental state and spiritual well-being. Once the fundamental characteristics of the individuals are properly nurtured and nourished it naturally results in a strong foundation of one's personality traits and identity. It eventually paves way for the adequate effort, time, strategy and other aspects required to achieve the desired fruit or the desired goal of life. Therefore, Kabir advises us to trust the inner strength of ability of oneself which develops through a true soul and is the seed of all fulfillments. He encourages all to work on the same and not worry about the result or the negative aspects of life.

On Self-Reliance:

Apart from the emphasis on nurturing the inner self, Kabir also attempts to instill in everyone the idea of self-belief, self-love and self-reliance. He advises us not to depend on others for anything. He emphasizes on the idea that each one has one's own capability, strength and wisdom to be responsible for oneself and act accordingly to acquire and attain one's goals, dreams and aspirations. Kabir proclaims:

“Use the strength of your own arm, stop putting hope in others;

When the river flows through your own yard, how can you die of thirst?”

The above verses highlight the powerful message of self-reliance. Kabir attempts to make us realize that one should not depend on others or any other source of external help but should be capable enough to take responsibility. The word river in the above verse refers to the abundance of opportunities and other useful resources present around oneself which one fails to recognize and avail. Therefore, it is through self-realization one can attain or achieve anything one puts his mind and heart into through the means of one's own responsible actions and efforts without depending on others. The verse also imparts the wisdom that the time and efforts required to accomplish something may vary from person to person but with right efforts, consistency, dedication, and willpower one can achieve anything on one's own.

On Authenticity over Conformity:

In the current scenario we are at times enchanted or captivated by what others around us believe, practice or follow and we might wish to follow their footprints. Our emotions at times completely empower and control us and one tends to be anxious, jealous or ruled by other negative factors. It affects one's heart and mind as a result of which one's decision making makes us suffer. Kabir warns us of such situation and proclaims,

*"What's the world like? A flock of sheep;
One falls in the ditch, the rest jump in."*

It is usually observed that one tends to participate in the rat race where everyone else wants to pace up and win. People join without analyzing its relevance, emphasis and impact on their life. We are deluded by the fact that everyone is doing it and following the race then we might be at loss if we act the opposite. Kabir, therefore warns us to be insightful enough to properly analyze its role in our life and then plan to act accordingly. At present, we are highly influenced by the ongoing trends of cuisines, fashion, curriculum and other commodities we across through social media or other sources of information technology around us. In the terminology of logical reasoning the instance of following or practicing something that every other person is doing is known as bandwagon fallacy. It also occurs when we blindly tend to follow something after being influenced from the promotional activities or endorsements done by popular celebrities on different platforms without utilizing one's insights and critical thinking but through core misconception.

We should be brave and intelligent enough to explore, analyze, plan and execute as per our requirements, ability and dreams. We should not impulsively just begin to exercise what the others around us are doing, asking us to do and expecting out of us. The similar lesson has been taught in the poem *'The Road not Taken'* by one of the prominent American poets, Robert Frost. The poem presents a situation where a person reaches at a point where he sees the pathway diverged into two; one frequently travelled while the other rarely or less travelled. The poem not only presents a situation of choice for the protagonist but also for the readers to explore, analyze and reflect how our choices influence our decision making and eventually our lives. The poem concludes by giving the impression that choosing the less travelled road made all the difference. Emerson, one of the prominent American essayists has emphasized on this instance in a unique manner. He proclaims:

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

On fake identities:

There are instances of coming across with people with a masked identity when one is on the quest to attain the best in life. Speech is also one of the vital tools one can utilize to extract the best out of the world. It holds a crucial value in almost every person's life irrespective of one's age. No matter if it is infancy or the old age, the speech is somewhat the reflection of our soul. Throughout our life we are advised to use kind and appropriate words as per the situation demands. It is also a believed and accepted

fact that one can win over a person, society nation and the world through our speech. Kabir attempts to represent his perspective over a situation. We are times caught up in a situation when we find the words chosen or the speaker or the appearance of the person pleasing or impressive. But the moment that person starts to speak, his words reflect the exact opposite of his outer appearance. Kabir warns and advises us not to be fooled or misguided by these temptations. Kabir declares:

"Into a lion's coat, rushes a goat, you'll recognize him by his talk, the word reveals."

Kabir also warns and advises us about a second situation we might face. Sometimes we are also influenced by the person's speech or words but are unable to examine the underlying agenda or hidden motive behind the same. One might appear with a masked identity to fool, deceive or negatively affect us but through our insightful analysis one can prevent such a situation and beware of such fake people.

On Pride and discrimination:

Ups and down, success and failure are part and parcel of one's life. Each one of us embarks on the journey to acquire the best in one's life and the path towards the same may be smooth or duntrodden. The ones who reach the ladder of success earlier than the others sometimes tend to look down upon the ones who either are on the way to the top or have given up analyzing the efforts required to reach the top or due to some other reasons. Kabir warns the ones on the peak of success not to look down upon the ones on the bottom as life is full of uncertainty and time is powerful. It is highly unpredictable that in no time the gears of time and time may be reversed resulting in the one at the top suddenly reach the bottom and vice-versa. Kabir advises us all not to hold any bias towards someone facing crisis or a difficult situation in their life. Kabir also suggests that each one of us irrespective of social, cultural, regional, economic disparities and diversity has one's own commendable qualities and drawbacks. Therefore, Kabir advises us not to hold any negative emotions towards someone due to any such factor. He warns:

"Kabir don't be arrogant; never laugh at other's plight."

The boat is still in the sea and its unknown what may betide."

On criticism:

During the pursuit of success and happiness one is likely to face criticism, self-doubt, hopelessness and other factors which tend to shake our morale and confidence as a result of which one also starts to look down upon the critics and also upon oneself. It is a human tendency to be affected by the criticism one faces during different phases of life but

the more one is affected from it, the more it prevents a person to perform well. In that state one knots oneself into the ties of self-doubt of under-capability, under-confidence, low morale and other factors which may result in inconsistency, procrastination, low concentration, affected decision making, poor planning and execution and thereby undesired or unexpected results. Kabir suggests us not to divert our energy into something negative and continue with a positive approach. According to Kabir, criticism is mainly the voice that shapes us. He advises:

“Keep your critics near at hand- don’t let them out of sight;

They, without water or soap, keep you spotless and bright.”

Kabir advises us to perceive the situation of criticism faced with a different outlook and with a positive energy. He suggests that one can accept the critics as the guiding light who can help us realize our flaws and shortcomings so that we can work on ourselves accordingly. This can also help in one’s refinement through reflection. At times we tend to be affected by the criticism faced which may somehow lay impact on one’s relationship with the critics. Kabir advises not to have a bone of discontent or other negative emotions towards the critics and should keep them closer as criticism in one way or the other brings the best out of the people.

On Tolerance:

Kabir has also addressed on the willpower and unwavering spirit required to endure the harsh words or criticism from others during the times of adversity. He proclaims:

“Earth can bear being dug up, forests can floods endure;

God’s own can bear harsh words- no one else does, for sure.”

Kabir has also highlighted on the theme of selfless love showered by nature on everyone by using nature metaphors. Nature at present or the environment is facing a major crisis. Different biotic and abiotic elements of nature are getting deteriorated or exploited by man-made factors. Despite all this nature and its different byproducts selflessly serve the mankind and help in the sustainability and existence of life on earth. Nature’s selfless love and devotion towards all is highly praiseworthy, commendable and also a source of inspiration to all. Despite of all the vulnerable and threatening conditions it comes across and the harshness it suffers due to human’s benefits, nature continues to serve the mankind with same energy and spirit.

Nature faces and endures all the natural and man-made calamities occurring due to human interventions. The world is prone to a number of disasters due to these

influences. Nature has been worshipped by people since the early-vedic period and even at present before the idol worship and other religious rituals came into existence.

Kabir propagates to the world that the harsh words or critical conditions require high level of patience, tolerance and most importantly a pure heart and soul which is truly virtuous. These qualities highlight a person’s true spirituality and devotion towards God and that is the reason why not everyone but only a few people who instill these qualities in themselves are able to bear such situations in life with a positive energy.

On Detachment and solace:

It is a human tendency to seek happiness, contention or peace of mind through external factors may it be from social validation or from other worldly possessions. With changing pace and time, our dependency on others also tends to increase. When the outcomes don’t meet the expectations the peace of mind is at stake. In the journey of life, people are tempted by the materialistic possessions which somewhat makes them self-centered. Putting up one’s hopes, dreams and aspirations on others turns out to be futile as almost everyone is tied up in the knots of worldly ties. Every other person has one’s own set of priorities and expectations to fulfill which hardly leaves any time and space to help out others.

Kabir says that despite every self-centered approach or efforts for oneself, one’s peace and happiness is beyond reach. It is mainly one’s selfish aspirations that result in a troubled state of heart and mind which blurs the ultimate reality. It is only through self-realization one can attain this wisdom. Kabir attempts to make us realize that peace of mind is not attained through external factors but from a pure soul. Every other effort to attain it turns in vain. The teachings of Kabir are an outcome of his own wisdom and realization attained through his own experiences in life and also the lessons he himself acquired after witnessing the sufferings faced by the inhabitants of the places he travelled during his lifetime. Kabir realizes:

“I found no balm for my heart- all those I met were selfish;

Kabir says, when the very sky is torn- how will the tailor stitch.”

The phrase ‘sky is torn’ in the above verses is symbolic of our heart which is in a troubled state due to worldly desires and aspirations. Kabir preaches that unless we are able to let go or detach oneself from the same, we would not be able to feel contented. The tailor here is God who can only be attained or reached when one has a pure soul.

CONCLUSION

Elements of nature as literary devices in the teachings of Kabir cover one of the vital facets of life for one and all. Kabir has imparted to the society, nation and the world on the themes such as fake identities; intrinsic nature of individuals; criticism; indifference in behavior, tolerance; on pride and discrimination; detachment and solace; self-reliance and most importantly a true soul which contributes towards discovering our inner energy which thereby These themes not only held relevance during the era of Kabir in the 15th century but hold universal relevance and timeless appeal even the times at present. Kabir, through his words of wisdom has attempted to emphasize on the fact that the core values and the inner reality of the individual build the foundational aspects of the individuals. These values contribute in channelizing one's energy towards the self-realization, awakening, inner-peace and contention to one and all. This may eventually contribute towards the betterment and well-being of the society, nation and the world.

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